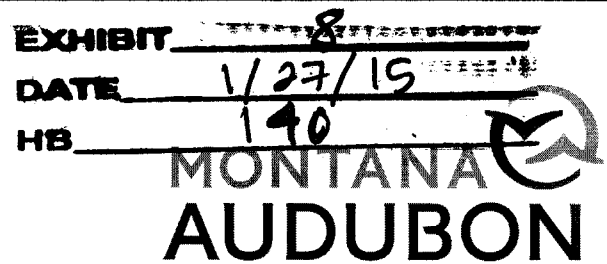


Testimony on HB140
House Fish, Wildlife and Parks
January 27th, 2015



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Chairman Flynn and Members of the Committee,

My name is Amy Seaman and I am here representing Montana Audubon's over 5,200 members. It is our mission is to promote the appreciation, knowledge and conservation of Montana's native birds, other wildlife, and natural ecosystems to safeguard biological diversity for current and future generations.

We are in support of HB140's recommended license value increases, license options, discount license streamlining and structural funding changes because Fish, Wildlife and Parks, contrary to almost all other agencies, does not receive its funding from general tax revenue. This caveat, more than any, makes it imperative and just for the legislature to allow FWP to protect its funding source into the future.

Wildlife is one of the main reasons people - residents, visitors, students, professionals, and entrepreneurs, come and stay in Montana contributing over \$1 billion to our outdoor economy. This economy revolves around the health and abundance of this wildlife, therefore the ability of Fish Wildlife and Parks to carry out its daily obligations- providing for the stewardship and public trust of our Montana's fish, wildlife, parks, and recreation opportunities is imperative. Unfortunately budget limits within the agency trickles down and throughout our economy. All Montanans rely on license dollars that go towards staffing hunter check-stations, managing Wildlife management areas, creating wildlife management plans - including mitigation programs, seasonal employees, biological technicians, and the flight hours crucial to manage and count game populations, block management funding (currently 1,270 owners enrolled), diverse habitat projects, environmental assessments and more.

One thing you may hear less about today is the importance of FWP to the 742 non-game species they are responsible for managing. Some of these are the 429 species of bird that over 40% of Montanans seek out every year. Others are the rodents, bats, snakes and they like that we rely on to disperse native tree and plant species, eat mosquitoes and generally control insect outbreaks, eat each other, and feed our suite of charismatic predators. The importance of these species to Montana's economy, in addition to the abundant game and fish, should not be understated. To this effect, HB 140 also reminds us that the wildlife conservation license is an ever-present option for the "non-consumptive" wildlife-use crowd - those of us shooting animals with cameras and iPhones.

There are times when thinking about raising hunting license fees could make you want to run around yelling "no new taxes", but it is important to think about how no new funding could tax the system -

A system responsible for the health and productivity of 12 big game species, 86 fish species, and 742 nongame species, including 428 (444 including rare) birds. Many states have lost species entirely from their landscape. Montana has fared well in this regard and we should keep it that way. For these reasons we strongly urge a do-pass. Thank you.

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